

IN ENGLISH, GOD OR ALLAH?

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I quote below two passages relating to the sensitive question of whether we should use “God” or “Allah” when referring to the Supreme Being of Islam in English:

“We have been eclectic in the Quranic passages quoted in English translation. Pickthall’s admirable work is often used as the starting point for many of the translations. However, we have made one consistent change in his work: substituting the English “God” for the Arabic “Allah” to avoid the invidious connotation that Jews, Christians, and Muslims are talking about different Supreme Beings.” (Jay R. Crook, *The New Testament: An Islamic Perspective*, p. xi.)

“*Allāh*, [is] thought to be a contraction of *al-ilāh*, which simply means “the God.” It is the equivalent of the English capitalized “God” referring to the Supreme Deity. It is regularly used by Arabs, both Muslim and Christian (including Arabic translations of the Bible distributed by Christians), for the English word “God” (and its equivalents in other languages) and does not designate a different god, as seems to be the impression among some popular Christian critics of Islam.” (Ibid., Note 45, p. 25)

Thus, Christian Arabs also call God “Allah.” We give below an example of this from an Arabic translation of the New Testament. The passage selected is *John* 1:1-13:

إِجْمِلُ يوحنا

الاصحاح الأول

١ في البدء كان الكلمة والكلمة كان عند الله وكان الكلمة الله. ٢ هذا كان في البدء
٣ عند الله. كل شيء به كان وبغيره لم يكن شيء مما كان. ٤ فيه كانت الحياة والمحبة كانت
٥ نور الناس. والنور بقي في الظلمة والظلمة لم تدركه
٦ كان إنسان مرسل من الله اسمه يوحنا. ٧ هذا جاء للشهادة لنور لكي يؤمن
٨ الكل بواسطته. لم يكن هو النور بل يشهد للنور. كان النور الحقيقي الذي يبر كل إنسان
٩ آيما إلى العالم. ١٠ اُكاتب في العالم وكوّن العالم به ولم يعرفه العالم. ١١ إلى خاصته جاء
١٢ وخاصته لم تقبله. ١٣ وأما كل الذين قبلوه فأعطاهم سلطانا أن يصيروا أولاد الله أبي
١٤ المؤمنين باسمه. ١٥ الذين ولدوا ليس من دمر ولا من مشيئة جسد ولا من مشيئة رجل
بل من الله

In the English text of these verses, the word “God” is used six times; three in the first two verses. Those who can read the Arabic translation or have access to someone who can, will find the word “Allah” used exactly six times; three in the first two verses. Hence, English *God* = Arabic *Allah*.

Peace to all men and women of good will!